DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 432 006 CS 013 642

AUTHOR Ediger, Marlow
TITLE The Principal and the Reading Curriculum.
PUB DATE 1999-08-19
NOTE 7p.
PUB TYPE Opinion Papers (120)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Administrator Role; Context Clues; Creative Thinking; Critical Thinking; *Curriculum Development; Elementary Education; *Phonics; *Principals; Problem Solving; *Reading Comprehension; *Reading Instruction; Whole Language Approach; Word Recognition

ABSTRACT

The principal is the educational leader of the school and he or she needs to guide teachers in using quality learning opportunities for pupils to achieve objectives. The reading curriculum cuts across all curriculum areas and needs updating continuously to assist pupils to achieve as well as possible. In supervising reading instruction, there are five main approaches considered: (1) the use of phonics; (2) the use of context clues; (3) word recognition clues using syllabication skills; (4) word recognition skill using picture clues; and (5) word recognition skill using configuration clues. It should not be either/or such as in the phonics versus whole language debate, but rather a consideration of what the child needs individually. Comprehension is also needed for pupils to become good readers. Students need skills in reading to solve problems, to learn critical reading, to learn creative reading, to select vital facts, and to comprehend directions. (SC)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED 432 006

The Principal and the Reading Curriculum.

by Marlow Ediger

Published:

1999-08-19

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION
CENTER (ERIC)

- This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
- Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
- Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

CS 013 642

THE PRINCIPAL AND THE READING CURRICULUM

The principal is the leader of the curriculum in a specific school. He/she supervises instruction, including the area of reading. Some states require the principal to make a certain number of observational visits to classrooms in his/her building. Missouri, as an example, requires a yearly visit to nontenured teachers at least once a year, whereas tenured faculty are to be visited once every three years minimally. Pre- and post-conferences are to be conducted for each visit. The principal is expected not only to assess the quality of teaching, but also to make recommendations for making improvements in instruction. I will discuss selected items that are salient for principals to know in observing reading instruction (Ediger, 1996, 8-12).

Supervising Reading Instruction

There is a constant debate on how much phonics should be taught to pupils. Should phonics instruction be systematic or taught as needed? I believe this debate might be resolved by observing pupils and discerning the observed needs of individuals (Ediger, 1998, 1-14).

The needs of pupils do emphasize which word attack skills should be taught so that the pupil may identify unknown words individually. Phonics is one way to identify unknown words. What should be taught is based on the learner`s deficiencies in reading. If a pupil cannot identify an unknown word starting with a specific letter such as "b," the pupil needs practice in identifying words that start with that letter and its sound. The following are examples of words beginning with the letter "b" with its accompanying sound: boy, bat, baby, ball, and both. Pictures can be used to accompany the first four

words listed whereby, for example, a picture of a boy accompanies the abstract word "boy." Diagnosis of individual pupils' problems in reading indicates what specifically needs emphasis in phonics instruction. A variety of learning opportunities then will assist the learner in doing well in phonics (Ediger, 1994, 237-245).

A second approach equally important in pupils identifying unknown words is the use of context clues. Thus, if a pupil does not identify a word in reading, he/she needs to use the surrounding words to make a meaningful choice. Sometimes there are several words that fit in meaningfully in context. Using phonics for the initial consonant sound assists the learner to make the correct identification (Ediger, 1994, 11-15).

A third word recognition clue for principals to understand emphasizes use of syllabication. A word is not known, but by dividing it into syllables becomes familiar to the child. For example, the word "unlikely" may look very unfamiliar to the pupil, but by taking away the prefix "un" and/or the suffix "ly," the base word is "like" which might be familiar to the learner. Syllabication skills are important and necessary for pupils to acquire (Ediger, 1997-1998, 21-23).

A fourth kind of word recognition skill is for pupils to use picture clues. Several principals in schools where I supervise student teachers and cooperating teachers have mentioned to me that young children too frequently do not use picture clues. There tend to be many pictures in basals and library books for young pupils. Thus, if a pupil does not identify a word in context, he/she may look at the picture on the same page and obtain clues as to the correct word. Pupils need to be taught to look at all pictures in books not

only as a means of learning subject matter, but also in word identification and vocabulary development.

A fifth skill in word recognition is to use configuration clues. A pupil then realizes that some words are longer than others and/or have taller or shorter letters. Here, pupils have been taught to notice individual letters as well as the shape/configuration of the unknown. Selected principals in schools feel that pupils become more sensitive when looking at words when configuration clues are used. They believe that, as a result, pupils become increasingly meticulous in identification and spelling of words. Selected teachers tend to minimize use of configuration clues in reading instruction. They think that pupils can be taught to look at words carefully through phonics and syllabication skills. I suggest that there are individual pupils, based on need, who might benefit from instruction in using configuration clues to identify unknown words (Ediger, 1987, 26-30).

I believe that it should not be either/or such as in the phonics versus whole language debate, but rather look at what the child individually needs. Pupils are different from each other. I have observed pupils who have become good readers through a whole language approach. Good readers have also experienced a systematic phonics curriculum and become capable in comprehension of content. What about those who should have but did not become capable in the knowledge, skills, and attitudes of reading? Were these children caught up in the phonics versus whole language debate and not provided with what is necessary on an individual basis to become proficient readers? This is a difficult question to answer. There are many variables in the child's life that affect how well reading achievement will be such as the quality of general physical and mental

health, opportunities to learn in the community, stability and care provided in home life, and attitudes of others that are experienced. Critics of public schools should not simplify as to causes of why individuals do or do not achieve well (Ediger, 1997-1998, 1-6).

Comprehension Skills of Learners

In addition to word recognition skills that pupils need to develop to become good readers, comprehension of what has been read is salient for the learner. What good is it to be able to recognize words in print only? It does become highly significant when comprehension of content is a resulting factor.

Which kinds of comprehension are important for pupils to achieve?

Certainly, pupils need skill in reading to solve problems. Problem solving is of utmost importance in school and in society. Content read by pupils is directly related to an identified problem. The answer is tentative and needs to be evaluated to provide an adequate solution.

Second, pupils need to learn critical reading. Here, pupils when reading analyze accurate from inaccurate information, factual content from opinions, as well as the relevant from the irrelevant (Ediger, 1997, 41-45).

Third, creative reading is important whereby learners read to come up with novel, unique ideas (Ediger, 1998, 183-191).

Fourth, pupils need to read to select vital facts. Facts are the building blocks for all other kinds of comprehension (Ediger, 1998, 137-144).

Fifth, pupils need to learn to read to comprehend directions. Exercises and worksheets as purposeful activities may be done incorrectly unless the pupil reads the

directions carefully.

In Summary

The principal is the educational leader of the school. He/she needs to guide teachers in using quality learning opportunities for pupils to achieve objectives. The reading curriculum cuts across all curriculum areas and needs updating continuously to assist pupils to achieve as well as possible.

References

Ediger, Marlow (1996), Essays in School Administration. Kirksville, Missouri: Simpson Publishing Company, 8-12.

Ediger, Marlow (1998), Teaching Reading Successfully in the Elementary School. Kirksville, Missouri: Simpson Publishing Company, 1-14.

Ediger, Marlow (1997), Teaching Reading and the Language Arts in the Elementary School. Kirksville, Missouri: Simpson Publishing Company, 237-245.

Ediger, Marlow (1994), "Shared Leadership in the Curriculum," Education Magazine, nr. 110, 11-15. Published by the Qatar National Commission for Education, in the Middle East.

Ediger, Marlow (1997-1998), "Middle School Pupils Write Legends," Arizona Reading Journal, 24 (2), 21-23.

Ediger, Marlow (1987), "Teaching the Gifted in the Science Curriculum," The Progress of Education, 62 (2), 26-30. Published in India.

Ediger, Marlow (1997-1998), "Recent Issues in Education," Philippine Education Quarterly, 26 (1), 1-6.

Ediger, Marlow (1997), "Reading and the Psychology of Teaching," The Educational Review, 103 (3), 41-45.

Ediger, Marlow (1998), "Spelling and the Language Arts," Experiments in Education, 26 (11), 183-191. Published in India.

Ediger, Marlow (1998), "Issues and Technology Use in the Reading Curriculum," Reading Improvement, 35 (3), 137-144.